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THE
RURAL DISTRICT OF ELY

ANNUAL REPORT

for the year

1955

by

K. S. MAURICE-SMITH,

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

Medical Officer of Health.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF

HEALTH FOR 1955.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 1955.

1. STATISTICS:

During 1955 the usual statistics have been kept and are available.

2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES:

(a) Ambulances.— Two ambulances are stationed at Ely, both being operated by the Isle of Ely County Council. One is for infectious diseases and the other for non-infectious diseases.

The Littleport St. John Ambulance continues to work under the agency agreement with the County Council. I have once again to comment on the excellent service rendered by this vehicle and to emphasize the value of these services, not only to the rural area but also to adjacent areas.

The Ely and Littleport St. John Divisions continue to supply attendants for these two vehicles. It is, perhaps, not realised generally how much effort is demanded of the members of these two Divisions who so willingly and gladly devote many of their leisure hours to these duties.

2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES (Contd.):

- (b) Nursing and Clinic Arrangements.- These are the same as for previous years. The District is much indebted to the District Nurses for their willing and efficient efforts.
- (c) Hospitals.-
- (i) Tower Hospital for Chronic Sick
 - (ii) The Isolation Hospital
 - (iii) The Grange Maternity Home

These hospitals are under the control of the Regional Hospital Board.

3. WATER:

- (a) (i) The supply for the district is drawn from two chalk wells at West Row. During 1955 water supplies of adequate quantity and quality have been maintained.
- (ii) There have been no major breakdowns during the year.
- (b) (i) The Chloramine Plant has been in use continually and has proved satisfactory. The chloramine process permits of the treatment of the water at the source.
- (ii) The usual chemical and bacteriological examinations were made during the year and proved satisfactory. In addition all new mains are sampled and no connections are made until the reports on these samples are found satisfactory.
- (iii) With regard to that portion of the pumping main which passes through the gault bed near Soham, to which I made reference in my last Report: there have been several bursts occurring in this area. I am very satisfied to note that plans are, however, going forward for the relaying of several hundred yards of this main, and it is fully expected that these plans will be implemented during the coming year.

3. WATER (Contd.) :

- (b) (iv) There is an abundant supply of pure water available, and at no time has it been necessary to restrict supplies, notwithstanding the insufficient storage capacity.
- (v) The water has no plumbo-solvent action.
- (vi) Referring to the general supply of water to houses in the area, it is estimated that between 98-99% of houses are covered.

I am of the opinion that conditions compare most favourably with those of other rural local authorities and should afford the Council much satisfaction.

There have been no extensions during the year.

4. SEWAGE:

- (a) The problem of sewage disposal, to which I have referred in previous Reports, remains as serious as ever, despite the Council's protest against the Ministry's ruling. Taking into consideration the yearly increase in the number of new houses, I can but repeat my feeling of deep concern about the existing position. The fact that the Council has pressed vigorously to be allowed to go forward with contemplated schemes can only emphasize the awareness of the Council of the task ahead.

I must re-iterate my deepest dissatisfaction at the primitive conditions existing in the District.

- (b) The Brook Area Scheme in Sutton to which I referred last year has been completed, which is a source of some satisfaction. The scheme covering the remainder of the village is still in abeyance, so that it is not possible to remove this village from the "Sewage Black Spot" list.

4. SEWAGE (Contd.):

(b) Stretham must also be added to this "Black Spot" list, with every justification I consider, as it is one of the larger rural parishes, having a population of some 1,000.

I must sadly record that the Council have received no concessions during 1955 so far as their projected schemes of sewage disposal are concerned.

5. HOUSING:

Permanent Housing:

No. of dwellings completed during 1955	61
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No. of dwellings provided under the Housing Acts to 31st December 1955	1435
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No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1955	51
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Temporary Housing:

Total number of converted ex-service huts occupied at 31st December 1955	56
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Private Enterprise:

New Permanent Houses:

No. of dwellings completed during 1955	17
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No. of dwellings completed since 1st April 1945	204
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No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1955	16
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5. HOUSING (Contd.):

Private Enterprise (Contd.):

Provision and Improvement of Dwellings with aid of Improvement Grants under Housing Act 1949:

	<u>Schemes</u>	<u>Dwellings</u>
No. of schemes approved for grant and	) Since 1949	76
No. of dwellings to be provided or improved	) In 1955	46
Amount of Grant involved by approved schemes	) Since 1949) In 1955	£21,530: 4:10 £13,048:16:10
No. of schemes completed and	) Since 1949	47
No. of dwellings provided or improved	) In 1955	39
Amount of Grant paid	Since 1949 In 1955	£13,133: 5: 6 £10,966: 0: 1

6. SCHOOLS:

The position remains unchanged, and I doubt if any comments of mine will be in any way useful!

7. MILK:

The issue of any "Stop Orders" has not been necessary during the year, I am glad to report.

Generally speaking the milk supply position in the District is excellent, most of the milk sold coming from tuberculin tested herds or it is pasteurised or both.

7. MILK (Contd.):

The Milk & Dairies Regulations (1949) not only lay down necessary provisions and precautions to eliminate as much as possible any risk of contamination or infection in relation to the production of milk and its storage, the cleaning and storage of all utensils, appliances etc. connected therewith, but they also set up penalties for the contravention of such Regulations.

If cases of dirty and insufficiently cleansed milk bottles are brought to the notice of either the Sanitary Inspector or myself, such cases will be reported immediately to the Council with a view to the instigation of early and vigorous action.

On the other hand, the general public must realise that milk bottles are intended only for milk and not for storage of paraffin, oil and other harmful liquids.

I wish also to impress on the public generally the need to discontinue the dirty habit of leaving empty milk bottles on the pavement, particularly where they can be targets for passing animals. This practice is not in any way fair to the producers and suppliers of milk.

8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES:

(a) 218 notifications of infectious disease were received.

The total of 218 cases is made up as follows :-

Measles	180
Pneumonia	4
Anterior Poliomyelitis	5
Dysentery	1
Scarlet Fever	13
Erysipelas	4
Whooping Cough	6
Paratyphoid "B"	1
Diphtheria	1 (Diagnosis not confirmed)
Salmonella typhi-murium	1
Encephalitis	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	1
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8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES (Contd.):

(b) It is extremely satisfactory to be able to report the complete absence of diphtheria in the District during the year.

Unless parents and those in charge of children appreciate the dangerous character of this disease, which has been a "killer" in the past, and take steps to have the children for whom they are responsible efficiently immunised, we shall doubtless be faced in the quite near future with a recurrence of the really terrible cases with which I had to deal in my early days in practice. The immunization can be carried out either by the family doctor or at a County Council Clinic with no upset or trouble to the child.

(c) Disinfection of premises etc. is regularly carried out in cases of notifiable disease; also when infection is reported or requests are received for any special reasons.

(d) Tuberculosis:

14 new cases were notified during the year. After making the necessary adjustments there are the following numbers on the Register :-

<u>Respiratory</u>		<u>Non-Respiratory</u>	
Male	34	Male	5
Female	26	Female	6

Compared with 1954, the figures shew a decrease of 5 cases.

9. FOOD:

The Food Hygiene Regulations (1955), operative as from 1st January 1956, are of a detailed and comprehensive character and lay down provisions in respect of the hygienic handling of food and the construction and maintenance of premises including staff canteens, stalls etc. where food is handled. They do not apply to slaughter-houses, warehouses, cold stores etc. (other than staff canteens in such premises) which are covered by other regulations.

9. FOOD (Contd.):

These Regulations will give the Council's Officers greatly increased opportunities of raising, and, where necessary, of enforcing the general standards of food hygiene in the District.

There are a number of food shops in the District where strenuous efforts have been made by the proprietors and owners to improve standards by the provision of excellent equipment, washing facilities etc. I wish it was possible to mention such premises by name in this Report, so that the public could support such efforts.

I would emphasize, however, that the excellence of such premises can be rendered quite useless by a dirty, careless or unthinking employee. Strict personal cleanliness is the basic rule for every individual, without exception, be he or she owner, manager or assistant, engaged in food handling.

Lastly, during the course of my daily work I am often appalled at the awful conditions under which food is kept, cooked and served in many households. It is useless to expect official regulations to produce full results if the houses into which the food eventually finds its way do not deal with that food hygienically.

10. MISCELLANEOUS:

(a) Rodent Control.- During the year the Sanitary Inspector and the Rodent Officer have done 982 Inspections, which include 858 dwelling houses and business premises and 124 agricultural premises; 570 treatments, including 60 re-treatments have been carried out.

(b) Moveable Dwellings.- I must record, yet again, my profound dissatisfaction with the present useless legislation relating to moveable dwellings, caravans etc., Public Health problems which may at any time give rise to great anxiety and which cannot be dealt with under the Public Health Act 1936 provisions; in my opinion it is high time that urgent amending legislation was considered by the Authorities.

10. MISCELLANEOUS (Contd.):

- (c) Factories Act.- There is no great problem here as only one factory of any size exists in the District. The position generally is reviewed, however, from time to time.
- (d) Slaughter-houses.- The position remains the same as in my Report for 1954, and I have no further comments to offer this year.

11. PERSONAL:

To my colleagues, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Engineer & Surveyor, Sanitary Inspector and Water Engineer, I offer my warmest thanks for their continued willing co-operation and advice. I can only say how very grateful I am to them.

I have the honour to be,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

K. S. MAURICE-SMITH

Medical Officer of Health,
Ely Rural District Council.

